Sri Nilakantha Varni
(Or, Swami Sahajananda)

Ref: Google Gemini

Nilakantha Varni is a historical figure from the late 18th century, not a fictional character. He was a real person whose life and journey are central to the history of the **Swaminarayan Sampraday**.

Here are the key facts about him:

The Historical Person

Nilakantha Varni was the name adopted by **Ghanshyam Pande** (born 1781 in Uttar Pradesh) when he renounced his home at the age of 11. He was a child-yogi who spent seven years (1792–1799) traveling across the length and breadth of India on foot.

- **His Journey:** He walked over 12,000 kilometers, traveling through the Himalayas, Nepal, Tibet, and deep into South India, including places like Rameswaram and Kanyakumari.
- **Austerity:** He was known for practicing intense *tapas* (austerity), often traveling barefoot with very few possessions—usually just a loincloth and a small scripture.

Connection to the Present

While he is a saint of the **past** (he lived from 1781 to 1830), he is very much a part of the **present** through the legacy he left behind:

1. **Bhagwan Swaminarayan:** After his travels, he settled in Gujarat and was eventually initiated as **Sahajanand Swami**. He is the founder of the Swaminarayan movement, and his followers believe him to be a manifestation of the divine.
1. **Cultural Presence:** The "public media" you likely saw—such as the large-format films at Akshardham temples or digital documentaries—recounts his teenage years as Nilakantha Varni to inspire modern audiences with his themes of fearlessness and spiritual determination.
2. **Modern Monuments:** There are many statues and temples dedicated specifically to this "yogi" form, most notably the 49-foot bronze statue of Nilakantha Varni at the Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar.

So, while the stories of his travels may sometimes be presented with a cinematic flair in the media, they are based on the documented life of a historical Indian yogi who lived roughly 200 years ago.

Nilakantha Varni's life is often divided into two parts: his childhood and travels as a teenage yogi, and his later life as the head of a major spiritual movement.

Here is a structured overview of the key details for this document:

Birth and Early Life

- **Birth Name:** Ghanshyam Pande.
- **Birth Date:** April 3, 1781 (Chaitra Sud 9, Vikram Samvat 1837), coinciding with the festival of Rama Navami.
- **Location:** Chhapaiya, near Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India.
- **Parents:** His father was **Dharmadev** and his mother was **Bhaktimata**. He belonged to a devout Brahmin family.
- **Education:** By the age of 7, he had mastered the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. He was known for a sharp intellect that favored the philosophy of *Vishishtadvaita* (qualified non-dualism).

Renunciation and Sadhana (The Nilakantha Varni Phase)

- **Departure:** At age 11, following the passing of his parents, he left home to begin a journey of spiritual discovery. He adopted the name **Nilakantha Varni**.
- **Sadhana:** He practiced extreme austerities, including standing on one leg in the freezing heights of Muktinath (Nepal) for months. He sought a master who could explain the five eternal entities: *Jiva, Ishwar, Maya, Brahman,* and *Parabrahman*.
- **Siddhis (Attainments):** During his travels, he mastered **Ashtanga Yoga** in just nine months under the guidance of a yogi named Gopal Yogi. He was said to have control over his physiological functions and the elements of nature.

Travels and Miracles

- **The Journey:** He walked barefoot over 12,000 km throughout the Indian subcontinent.
- **Notable Miracles:** Many accounts describe him calming wild animals (including lions and tigers) and transforming the hearts of fierce tantrics and kings. One famous story involves him remaining unaffected by a severe winter while meditating in the Himalayas.

Guru and Leadership

- **Finding his Guru:** In 1799, his travels ended in Loj, Gujarat, where he met **Ramanand Swami**. He recognized Ramanand Swami as his guru.
- **Succession:** Ramanand Swami initiated him as Sahajanand Swami and later, at the young age of 21, appointed him as the head of the fellowship (Sampraday), passing over older and more experienced disciples.

Teachings and Social Impact

- **Philosophy:** He taught that the ultimate goal is to become *Brahmarup* (divine) and offer devotion to God.
- **Social Reform:** He was a vocal opponent of the *Sati* practice and female infanticide. He worked to abolish the caste system within his spiritual fold and encouraged education for all.

- **The Shikshapatri:** He authored a code of conduct called the *Shikshapatri*, which outlines 212 verses on moral and ethical living.

Ashrams and Disciples

- **Paramhansas:** He initiated over 500 *Paramhansas* (the highest order of monks), many of whom were renowned scholars and poets.
- **Temples:** He commissioned the construction of grand stone temples (Mandirs) in places like Ahmedabad, Bhuj, and Vadtal to provide a focal point for devotion.

Final Days and Samadhi

- **Departure:** He passed away (entered *Antardhan* or left his physical body) on June 1, 1830.
- **Samadhi Location:** His physical remains were cremated in **Gadhada**, Gujarat, where a beautiful memorial shrine (Lakshmi Wadi) stands today.

Summary Table for Your Document

Category	Details
Duration of Travels	7 years, 1 month, 11 days
Key Scripture	Vachanamrut (His recorded discourses)
Primary Mantra	The "Swaminarayan" Mahamantra (introduced by him in 1801)
Core Values	Non-violence (*Ahimsa*), Purity, and Devotion

Here are 10 impactful statements from the Vachanamrut that would be excellent for including in this document:

On Self-Realization and Mindset

1. **The Nature of the Soul:** "I am the soul, distinct from the body; the body is perishable, whereas I am eternal and the source of consciousness."
2. **On Introspection:** "A person who is wise should daily examine his own mind and see: 'Which thoughts are arising? Are they for my spiritual benefit or my downfall?'"
3. **Overcoming Ego:** "The greatest flaw in a devotee is the pride of his own wisdom or his lineage. Only a humble soul can truly realize God."

On Spiritual Practice

4. **The Definition of Dharma:** "Non-violence is the highest dharma; but above all is the dharma of remaining firm in one's devotion to God while following the rules of morality."
5. **On Focus:** "Just as a person who is hungry thinks of nothing but food, a true seeker should have a constant, unwavering thirst for the knowledge of the Divine."
6. **The Role of the Guru:** "Without the guidance of a God-realized Sant (Saint), the path to liberation is as difficult as finding one's way through a dense forest in total darkness."

On Peace and Resilience

7. **Detachment from Praise:** "One should remain unaffected by honor or insult. Both are like the changing seasons; they come and go, but the soul remains the same."
8. **On Happiness:** "True happiness does not reside in the objects of the senses, for they are temporary. Lasting peace is found only within the heart when it is filled with God."

On Conduct and Society

9. **The Power of Association:** "The company one keeps is the most powerful influence on one's character. Association with the virtuous leads to liberation, while association with the worldly leads to bondage."
10. **The Essence of Wisdom:** "To know God as He is, and to know one's own soul as distinct from the three bodies (gross, subtle, and causal), is the pinnacle of all spiritual endeavors."

Some incidents and miracles:

1. The Transformation of Pibek (The Power of Purity)

While traveling through the dense jungles of Kamakshi in Assam, Nilkanth Varni encountered a powerful tantric named **Pibek**, who was known for using black magic to control others.

- **The Incident:** Pibek felt threatened by Nilkanth's radiant spiritual presence and used all his mystical powers to strike the young boy down. Legend says Pibek summoned fierce spirits and unleashed violent storms against him.
- **The Outcome:** Nilkanth remained completely undisturbed in meditation. Realizing that his magic had no power over such a pure soul, Pibek fell at his feet, renounced his dark practices, and became a lifelong devotee.

2. The Test of the Five Questions (Scholarly Depth)

Nilkanth Varni's primary goal during his seven-year journey was to find a guru who could correctly explain the five eternal entities: **Jiva** (the soul), **Ishwar** (deities), **Maya** (illusion), **Brahman** (divine state), and **Parabrahman** (Supreme God).

- **The Scholarly Debate:** He visited many famous ashrams and monasteries, asking these five questions. Many learned scholars and mahants (abbots) gave traditional answers, but Nilkanth would debate them, pointing out the subtle logical flaws in their understanding of *Maya* or the distinction between *Brahman* and *Parabrahman*.
- **Resolution:** He finally found his answers when he met the disciples of **Ramanand Swami** in Gujarat. He was so impressed by their clarity and adherence to the *Shikshapatri* (moral codes) that he ended his 12,000 km journey there.

3. The Miracle at Shripur (Control over Nature)

In the village of Shripur, a ferocious lion had been terrorizing the local residents.

- **The Incident:** The mahant of a local temple begged the young Nilkanth to stay inside for safety. Instead, Nilkanth chose to sleep under a tree in the open.
- **The Sight:** The next morning, the mahant looked out and was astonished to see the lion sitting calmly at Nilkanth's feet, like a domestic cat. Nilkanth had tamed the animal through his aura of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and spiritual compassion

4. The Selfless Service to Sevakram

One of the most humanizing stories of his journey involves a fellow traveler named **Sevakram**, a sick sadhu whom Nilkanth met on the road.

- **The Act:** Sevakram was suffering from a severe illness and had 20kg of gold and belongings but no one to help him. Nilkanth cared for him for two months—cooking for him, cleaning his clothes, and nursing him back to health—despite Sevakram being ungrateful and selfish.
- **The Lesson:** This story is often cited as a prime example of "Nishkam Seva" (selfless service). Nilkanth later noted that he served Sevakram not for a reward, but because it was his duty to help a fellow human in pain.

5. Curing King Rana Bahadur Shah

While in Nepal, Nilkanth Varni encountered the King, **Rana Bahadur Shah**, who was suffering from a chronic, "incurable" stomach illness.

- **The Miracle:** Nilkanth cured the King's ailment. In deep gratitude, the King offered the young yogi half his kingdom.
- **The Detachment:** Nilkanth politely refused the kingdom, asking only that the King release all the innocent ascetics he had imprisoned out of frustration with his illness. This highlighted his total detachment from power and wealth.

Following video provides a beautifully narrated account of the story of Sevakram, illustrating Nilkanth Varni's humility and the profound life lessons behind his selfless service:

https://youtu.be/F8hZw9hGoLI?si=QkiE6IwkyCGrgHcJ

****

Ref: ClaudeAI

Sri Nilakantha Varni (Bhagwan Swaminarayan) - The Saint at the Heart of the Swaminarayan Sampraday

1. **Introduction**

Sri Nilakantha Varni is the name by which one of the most remarkable spiritual figures of modern India was known during his years of wandering and sadhana. Born Ghanshyam Pande on 3 April 1781 in Chhapaiya, a village near Ayodhya, he was a yogi and ascetic believed by followers to be a manifestation of Krishna or the highest manifestation of Purushottama, around whom the Swaminarayan Sampradaya developed. (Wikipedia) His life — from a prodigiously gifted child to a wandering celibate renunciant, and then to a great Acharya and reformer — stands as one of the most extraordinary spiritual biographies in Indian religious history. He settled in the state of Gujarat around 1799, and it was there that he transformed an existing spiritual lineage into what became known as the Swaminarayan Sampraday. (New World Encyclopedia) Today, his following is estimated at tens of millions worldwide.

2. **Birth and Early Life**

Swaminarayan was born Ghanshyam Pande in Chhapaiya, Uttar Pradesh, India in 1781. (New World Encyclopedia) He was named Ghanshyam Pande by his parents, Hariprasad Pande — also known as Dharmadev — and Premvati Pande, also known as Bhaktimata. The birth of Swaminarayan coincided with the Hindu festival of Rama Navami. (Wikipedia) This auspicious beginning was taken as a divine sign by those around him.

Swaminarayan had an elder brother, Rampratap Pande, and a younger brother, Ichcharam Pande. He is said to have mastered the scriptures — including the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata — by the age of seven. (Wikipedia) From his earliest years, Ghanshyam displayed extraordinary qualities: a keen philosophical intellect, intense devotion, deep compassion, and an instinctive detachment from worldly pleasures. His childhood was marked by incidents that revealed his unusual nature to all who witnessed them.

3. **Renunciation and Sadhana**

The turning point of his early life came with the passing of his beloved parents. Having no desire for worldly things, he left home at the tender age of 11 years 3 months and 1 day, early in the morning on the 10th day of the bright half of Ashadh in the year Vikram Samvat 1849 (29th June 1792 A.D). He took the name Nilkanth Varni as he embarked on his journey. (Sksst) The word "Varni" itself means a celibate student — one who has taken the vow of brahmacharya. Neelkanth left home with only a few possessions: a loin cloth, a small

scripture, a murti, and a begging bowl. He traveled with only what was necessary, renounced his family and other worldly possessions, and continued his lifelong journey of bringing people closer to God. (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha)

His mission was sharply defined from the start. He sought an ashram which practised the correct understanding of Hindu philosophies of Vedanta, Samkhya, Yoga, and Pancaratra. (Sksst) Throughout his journey he undertook extreme austerities — fasting for days, walking barefoot across scorching and stony terrain, braving the cold of the Himalayas and the heat of southern plains, and living without any material comfort. He was not afraid of snakes or wild animals such as tigers. At times he had nothing to eat and even passed several days without drinking water. (Sksst)

A landmark in his spiritual training came when he met a great yogi named Gopal Yogi. He stayed with Gopal Yogi for one year. The Yogi taught him Ashtang Yoga. Gopal Yogi was so pleased with Nilkanth that he stated his life's achievement was fulfilled by teaching Nilkanth. (Sksst) Crucially, Nilkanth Varni mastered Ashtanga yoga — eightfold yoga — in a span of nine months under the guidance of Gopal Yogi, an achievement that would take others twelve years. (Wikipedia) After the death of Gopal Yogi, his sadhana continued eastward, further south, and eventually across the length and breadth of the subcontinent.

4. **Travels and Miracles**

Neelkanth's travels spanned over 12,000 kilometres of the diverse terrain of India — the frost-covered peaks of the Himalayas, the jungles of Assam, and the beaches of the south. (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha) He visited virtually every major sacred site of Hinduism during this period.

In the Himalayas, one of the most astonishing episodes of his journey is recorded. Whilst travelling there, one of the amazements that Nilkanth Varni caused was that at a particular moment 900,000 yogis received his darshan simultaneously. (Sksst)

After mastering yoga, Nilkanth Varni headed east to a village near Kamakshidevi in Assam where he met a Mantracharya named Pibak, who had the power of invoking evil spirits. Having shown his powers, Pibak ordered Nilkanth Varni to be his disciple and threatened to destroy him if he disobeyed. Nevertheless, Nilkanth Varni instead of being afraid challenged him. Nilkanth Varni proved his superiority and eventually freed Pibak from the bonds of magical rituals and initiated him to the path of bhakti. (Sksst)

In Nepal, it is said that he met King Rana Bahadur Shah and cured him of his stomach illness. As a result, the king freed all the ascetics he had imprisoned. (Wikipedia)

Nilkanth Varni visited the Jagannath Temple in Puri. From there he entered Gujarat via Pandharpur, Pune and Nasik. After visiting places of pilgrimage at the banks of the Narmada and Tapi rivers he came to Dakor and then entered Saurashtra, proceeding to Dwarika. (Sksst) He also visited Badrinath and Rameswaram. In 1799, after a seven-year journey, Nilkanth's travels as a yogi eventually concluded in Loj, a village in the Junagadh district of Gujarat. (Wikipedia)

5. **Guru and Leadership**

At the age of 18 years and 4 months, Nilkanth finally arrived at Shree Ramanand Swami's Ashram in Lojpur, a village near Junagadh. However at this time Ramanand Swami was in Kutch, so the chief disciple Muktanand Swami received him and requested him to stay at the Ashram. (Sksst)

Nilkanth agreed to stay only under one condition — that his five foundational questions be answered satisfactorily. These were: What is Jiv (Soul)? What is Ishwar (the Personality of God)? What is Maya (the Lord's Internal Energy)? What is Brahma (Liberated Souls)? What is Para Brahma (Supreme Personality of Godhead)? Having asked these questions many times during his journey, Nilkanth Varni was overjoyed with Muktanand Swami's answers. In seven years of travelling no other saint had been able to answer them to his satisfaction. (Sksst)

Nilkanth Varni received sannyasa initiation from Ramanand Swami on 20 October 1800, and with it was granted the names Sahajanand Swami and Narayan Muni to signify his new status. At the age of 21, Sahajanand Swami was appointed successor to Ramanand Swami as the leader of the Uddhava Sampradaya, prior to his death. (Wikipedia)

Ramanand Swami called all his disciples at Faneni town and instructed everyone: "You have been obeying me. I am Uddhavji Avtar, but this **Shree Sahajanand Swami is the Supreme God, Purna Purushottam Narayan himself. You should now serve him obediently and give single-minded devotion if you wish to acquire ultimate salvation." (Swaminarayan)**

Sahajanand Swami was later known as Swaminarayan after a gathering in Faneni, a fortnight after the death of Ramanand Swami, in which he taught the Swaminarayan Mantra to his followers. When chanting this mantra, some devotees went into deep meditative states and claimed to see their personal gods. The Uddhava Sampradaya henceforth came to be known as the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. (Wikipedia)

6. **Teachings and Social Impact**

Swaminarayan's philosophy was grounded in pure devotion (bhakti), non-violence (ahimsa), dharma, and the cultivation of inner purity. He emphasised the supremacy of God in a personal, accessible form and insisted on the moral reformation of society alongside spiritual development.

His social reforms were remarkable for their era. He stopped the practice of sati, calling it suicide and murder. He stopped female infanticide. He encouraged his followers to educate females so they could give talks on spiritual subjects. He allowed members from all varnas (castes) into the Swaminarayan Sampraday, and instructed his paramhansas to collect alms from all sections of society. (Swaminarayan)

Swaminarayan insisted that education was the inherent right of all people, including women, despite considerable criticism from those in his own contemporary society who "loathed the uplift of lower caste women." The literacy rate among females began to increase during his time. (Wikipedia)

He had followers not only from Hindu denominations, but also from Islam and Zoroastrianism. He strove to maintain good relationships with people of other religions. (Wikipedia) He also developed a constructive relationship with the British imperial administration. Some were even Muslims who, while listening to Maharaj, were sent into deep trance (samadhi) where they saw visions of their own God. (Sksst)

7. **Ashram, Temples and Disciples**

Swaminarayan built six temples in his lifetime and appointed 500 paramhansas to spread his philosophy. (New World Encyclopedia) The first temple he constructed was in Ahmedabad in 1822, with the land for construction gifted by the British Imperial Government. A temple in Vadtal followed in 1824, a temple in Dholera in 1826, a temple in Junagadh in 1828, and a temple in Gadhada, also in 1828. (Wikipedia)

In establishing the temples, Lord Swaminarayan practically demonstrated his unique theory of Ekeshwarvad — Monotheism. He emphatically stated that deities named Nar-Narayan, Laxmi-Narayan, and Radha-Krishna are all forms of God Supreme. One should not draw any distinction between them. (Sksst)

Tradition maintains that Swaminarayan initiated 500 ascetics as paramahamsas in a single night. (Wikipedia) Among his most celebrated disciples were Muktanand Swami, Gopalanand Swami, Nityanand Swami, Shukanand Swami, and the great poet Brahmanand Swami. His permanent residence was established at Gadhada, at the court of the devoted nobleman Dada Khachar, who had offered himself, his family, and his wealth entirely in service to Maharaj.

In 1826, Swaminarayan wrote the Shikshapatri — a code of conduct for all disciples covering moral, social, and spiritual obligations. Through a legal document titled the Lekh, he created two dioceses — the Laxmi Narayan Dev Gadi (Vadtal Gadi) and Nar Narayan Dev Gadi (Ahmedabad Gadi) — with a hereditary leadership of acharyas beginning with two of his nephews whom he formally adopted. (Wikipedia)

8. **Final Days and Samadhi**

On the 10th day of the bright half of Jeth of Samvat year 1886, Lord Swaminarayan gathered all the leading Tyagis and Grahasthas before him at Gadhada. With a very calm and serene tone he said to them, "I have fully realised my mission and have established a royal path by following which one can easily reach Akshar Dham, the abode of God Supreme. I now wish to depart from this world. I promise you all that henceforward I will meet you all through my Deities established in the temples." (Sksst)

He died on 1 June 1830 (Jeth Sud 10, Samvat 1886). It is believed by followers that at the time of his death, Swaminarayan left Earth for Akshardham, his divine abode. He was cremated according to Hindu rites at Lakshmi Wadi in Gadhada. (Wikipedia) Swaminarayan had an estimated 1.8 million followers when he died. (New World Encyclopedia) Today that number has grown to tens of millions across India and the global diaspora.

9. **His Famous Literary Work — The Vachanamrut**

The Vachanamrut is a sacred text consisting of 273 religious discourses delivered by Swaminarayan from 1819 to 1829 CE and is considered the principal theological text within the Swaminarayan Sampradaya of Hinduism. (Wikipedia) The very name is profound: the word 'Vachanamrut' in Sanskrit means 'immortalising nectar in the form of words,' as it is believed that Swaminarayan's teachings in this scripture deliver eternal liberation. (Wikipedia)

The Vachanamrut is a historical collection of 273 spiritual discourses delivered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan between 1819 CE and 1829 CE. Bhagwan Swaminarayan described the Vachanamrut as being the quintessence of all scriptures. (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha)

Five of Swaminarayan's senior disciples — Gopalanand Swami, Muktanand Swami, Nityanand Swami, Shukanand Swami, and Brahmanand Swami — transcribed and compiled the discourses. (Wikipedia) Their scholarly and spiritual aptitude gave the text exceptional precision and depth.

One of the main factors confirming the authenticity of the Vachanamrut is its attention to detail regarding its date, setting, and people present. At the beginning of each discourse, the place, time of day, and date are given. The compilers then describe what Bhagwan Swaminarayan was wearing from head to toe, what he was holding in his hand, what he was sitting on, what city and location in the building he was seated in, what direction he was facing, and who was sitting in the assembly before him. (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha)

The style of discourse is highly dialogical and didactic, with most in the form of a question-and-answer session similar to the Upanishadic tradition of guru-disciple dialogue. These sermons were not restricted to any social group or gender — monks, scholars, peasants, craftsmen, and women were all present in the assemblies and all actively participated in the dialogue. (Wikipedia)

Bhagwan Swaminarayan has taken the most profound concepts of Hindu philosophy from the Prasthanatrayi and simplified them so that they can be universally understood. It is filled with sound logic, simple metaphors and analogies, and divine revelations that provide philosophical and practical answers to questions about spiritual living. (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha)

Regarding the details and precise dating present in each Vachanamrut, John Carmen, Professor of Comparative Religion at Harvard, noted that the inclusion of such information in a scriptural text nullifies a common Western misunderstanding that religious India lacks a sense of history. (Wikipedia)

To accommodate the growing audience, the Vachanamrut has been translated from Gujarati into English, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, and Marathi. Additionally, it is available in a cross-platform digital application format with extensive annotations and study aids. (Wikipedia)

10. **About 20 Important Teachings and Quotations from the Vachanamrut**

The following are key teachings drawn from the Vachanamrut, paraphrased from authenticated sources, with references to their location in the text:

1. On the Nature of God (Gadhada I-1)

God is not an abstraction. He possesses a divine, luminous form and resides eternally in Akshardham. The aspirant's liberation depends on realising this concrete, personal God.

2. On the Soul's Purpose (Gadhada I-7)

The Jiva (soul) is distinct from the body and from God, but its ultimate purpose is to dissolve all separateness and merge in devotion at the feet of Paramatma while retaining its own consciousness.

3. On Overcoming the Three Desires (Gadhada I-19)

A devotee who has been released from the three primal desires — for women, wealth, and fame — and who has developed unwavering devotion to God, will certainly attain liberation.

4. On Renunciation (Sarangpur 1)

True renunciation is not merely outer — it is the inner abandonment of the feeling of "I" and "mine" in relation to the body and its attachments.

5. On the Importance of Satsang (Gadhada I-60)

Association with a true saint is the most powerful means on the path to God. Without satsang, no amount of tapas or reading of scriptures will yield liberation.

6. On the Greatness of the Vachanamrut Itself (Gadhada II-28)

Swaminarayan declared: "I have delivered this discourse having heard and having extracted the essence from the Vedas, the Shastras, and the Puranas and all other words on this earth pertaining to liberation. This is the most profound and fundamental principle — it is the essence of all essences." (BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha)

7. On Knowledge of the Self (Gadhada I-51)

One who has truly understood that the atma is separate from the body and is of the nature of pure consciousness will never be disturbed by pleasure or pain, praise or blame.

8. On Maya (Loya 7)

Maya is not merely illusion. It is the force that causes the Jiva to identify with what is not the self — the body, senses, and ego — and thereby remain in bondage.

9. On the Highest Devotion (Gadhada II-22)

Bhakti that combines dharma, knowledge of the glory of God, vairagya (dispassion), and complete absorption in God is called Ekantik Bhakti — the singular devotion — and it alone leads to the highest liberation.

10. On the Guru (Gadhada I-27)

The true guru is one who has himself realised God and can, through his company and teachings, awaken that realisation in others. Such a guru should be sought with all sincerity and served with devotion.

11. On Ego as the Root Obstacle (Gadhada II-3)

Of all the obstacles on the spiritual path, ego (ahamkar) is the subtlest and most persistent. Even a great devotee who has conquered lust and greed may stumble if a trace of ego remains.

12. On Keeping God in the Heart Constantly (Gadhada I-2)

Just as a person who loves another thinks of them at all times without effort, a true devotee should develop such love for God that his form remains naturally and continuously in the mind.

13. On Fearlessness (Gadhada III-10)

One who has firm faith in God — knowing Him to be the innermost support of all creation — has nothing to fear. Death itself becomes a passage to the divine abode.

14. On the Five Eternal Realities (Sarangpur 11)

Swaminarayan outlines the five eternal truths: Jiva, Ishwar, Maya, Brahman (Akshar), and Parabrahman. True spiritual knowledge consists in understanding the nature and relationship of each.

15. On Forbearance (Gadhada II-13)

A devotee must cultivate forbearance — the capacity to remain unshaken in the face of criticism, hardship, and injustice — as this purifies the mind and keeps it fit for God's presence.

16. On the Company One Keeps (Loya 11)

Swaminarayan himself stated: "One should only hear the sacred scriptures." Bad company poisons spiritual progress more swiftly than any other force. (Wikipedia)

17. On Dharma as the Foundation (Gadhada I-11)

Dharma, Gnan, Vairagya, and Bhakti are the four pillars of spiritual life. Without dharma as the base, the other three cannot be sustained.

18. On the Glory of Human Birth (Kariyani 8)

The human birth is precious beyond measure — a rare gift in which alone liberation is possible. To waste it in worldly pursuits, knowing this, is the greatest misfortune.

19. On Samadhi and Vision of God (Gadhada II-38)

When the mind is fully purified and the devotee has firm upasana (worship) of the true form of God, a spontaneous state of deep absorption arises in which God is directly perceived.

20. On God's Promise to Devotees (Vachanamrut, Gadhada II)

Swaminarayan declared: "The Vachanamrut is my supreme wisdom, and I, Purushottam Narayan, have personally shared the nectar of these divine teachings with all of my kind devotees. My preferences, hidden intentions, and principles are all contained within the Vachanamrut." (Smvs)

11. **Notable Incidents from His Life**

The Healing of the Sick Sadhu (Sevakram)

As Nilkanth Varni continued his pilgrimage moving toward Setubandh Rameswaram, he met a very ill sadhu named Sevakram, who was wealthy but had no one to care for him. "Don't worry, sir. I shall serve and care for you," Varni said. Varni gathered banana leaves to construct a bed, cooked Sevakram's meals daily by begging ingredients from the village, and nursed him over several months. Yet the selfish Sevakram never once offered to share his food with Varni. (Kalupur Mandir) This episode reveals Nilkanth's extraordinary selflessness and compassion, serving unconditionally even when treated ungratefully.

The Yogi Who Taught 900,000 Disciples at Once

In the Himalayas, one of the amazements that Nilkanth Varni caused was that at a particular moment, 900,000 yogis received his darshan simultaneously. (Sksst) This incident became legendary among the Himalayan yogic communities.

Defeating the Tantric Pibak in Assam

When Nilkanth reached Assam, he encountered the powerful tantric Pibak, who threatened him with supernatural destruction if he refused to become his disciple. Nilkanth Varni instead of being afraid challenged him, proved his superiority, eventually freed Pibak from the bonds of magical rituals, and initiated him to the path of bhakti. (Sksst)

The Five Questions No Saint Could Answer

Throughout seven years of travel across India's spiritual landscape, Nilkanth put his five metaphysical questions to every saint and ashram he encountered. In seven years of travelling, no other saint had been able to answer them to his satisfaction (Sksst) — until Muktanand Swami at Lojpur, whose answers filled Nilkanth with such joy that he resolved to stay.

Curing the King of Nepal

In Nepal, it is said that he met King Rana Bahadur Shah and cured him of his stomach illness. As a result, the king freed all the ascetics he had imprisoned. (Wikipedia) This single act of compassion freed an entire community of religious wanderers.

The Swaminarayan Mantra and Mass Samadhi

After the death of Ramanand Swami, Sahajanand Swami gave his followers the Swaminarayan mantra. When chanting this mantra, some devotees went into samadhi and claimed that they could see their personal gods — even though they had no knowledge of Ashtanga Yoga. (Wikipedia) Observers from Islam and Zoroastrianism present at these gatherings also entered samadhi and saw visions of their own Divine.

The Blessing Requested of His Guru

Sahajanand Swami asked of Ramanand Swami: "If a follower of the sampraday suffers the pain of a scorpion sting, may that pain befall on me millions upon millions of times, but the satsangi of this sampraday should enjoy peace. If a follower of the sampraday suffers hardship in getting food and clothes, I beg that those hardships befall on me and the satsangi should get food and clothes easily." (Swaminarayan) This extraordinary request revealed the boundless compassion at the core of his being.

Meeting the Bishop of Calcutta

In a meeting with Reginald Heber, the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, in 1825, Swaminarayan himself hinted that he was a manifestation of God. (Wikipedia) The Bishop later wrote admiringly of his encounter with this remarkable holy man.

12. **Other Interesting and Relevant Information**

His Many Names

Swaminarayan also became known by the names Ghanshyam Maharaj, Shreeji Maharaj, Hari Krishna Maharaj, and Shri Hari. (Dharmapublication) Each name captures a different aspect of his divine personality and mission.

The Satsangi Jeevan — His Authorised Biography

The Satsangi Jeevan is the authorised biography of Swaminarayan, written by Shatanand Swami. Swaminarayan had blessed Shatanand Swami with Sanjay Drishti — a special power to see the entire past right from Swaminarayan's childhood — to enable him to write accurately. Once written, the book was verified and authenticated by Swaminarayan himself. (Wikipedia)

The Shikshapatri

In 1826, Swaminarayan personally composed the Shikshapatri — 212 Sanskrit verses forming a code of conduct for all followers. It covers daily prayer, personal conduct, social

ethics, dietary rules, non-violence, and reverence for all faiths. He himself declared: "My words are my very form," giving the Shikshapatri the status of his living presence.

His Theological Position

Swaminarayan proclaimed the worship of one sole deity — Krishna or Narayana. He had a more puritanical approach in contrast with theological views of Krishna that are strongly capricious in character and imagery, similar to the views of earlier Vaishnava teachers Ramanuja and Yamunacharya. (Dharmapublication)

His Global Legacy

Swaminarayan built six temples in his lifetime and appointed 500 paramahamsas to spread his philosophy. (New World Encyclopedia) Today, the Swaminarayan Sampraday — through its several branches, most prominently the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha — has built hundreds of temples across India, the United Kingdom, North America, Africa, and Australia, carrying forward the legacy of the boy who left home barefoot at eleven and transformed a nation's spiritual landscape.

The life of Sri Nilakantha Varni is, at its heart, a testament to the power of pure intention — that a child armed with nothing but sincerity, fearlessness, and the hunger for Truth could walk across an entire subcontinent, master its deepest philosophies, and become one of the most beloved spiritual figures of the modern age.

****

Ref: AI Overview

Swaminarayan Sampradaya

The Swaminarayan Sampraday is a Hindu Vaishnava tradition founded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781–1830) in the early 19th century, focusing on devotion to God within the disciplines of moral living. It promotes vegetarianism, addiction-free living, and purity of mind, with a strong emphasis on social and spiritual reform.

Key Aspects of the Sampraday:

- Founder: Bhagwan Swaminarayan, originally known as Nilkanth Varni, who took over the Uddhav Sampraday from his guru, Ramanand Swami, in 1802.
- Philosophy: Based on Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism), encouraging the worship of God with form.
- Core Beliefs:
  Belief in one Supreme God (Parabrahma), Karma, Reincarnation, and Avatarvad.
- Key Scriptures: The *Shikshapatri* and *Vachanamrut* are central to the faith.
- Structure: Before his passing, Bhagwan Swaminarayan established two main dioceses (Gadhis) in Ahmedabad and Vadtal, headed by Acharyas.
- Major Organizations: While the original dioceses exist, the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha is a major branch famous for building the Akshardham temples.

- Worship: Devotees follow a strict code of conduct and engage in daily prayers and temple worship.

Main Principles (The Five Vows):

1. Addiction-free living
2. Vegetarianism
3. Refraining from stealing
4. Abstaining from adultery
5. Maintaining purity of mind, body, and soul

The Swaminarayan movement is well-known for its large-scale social welfare activities, its focus on humanitarian service, and the construction of numerous temples worldwide.

***

Ref: Wikipedia

Swaminarayan Sampradaya

The **Swaminarayan Sampradaya**, also known as **Swaminarayan Hinduism** and **Swaminarayan movement**, is a Hindu Vaishnava sampradaya rooted in Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita,[note 1][note 2] characterized by the worship of its charismatic[3] founder Sahajanand Swami, better known as Swaminarayan (1781–1830), whom many regard as an avatar of Krishna[4][5][6] or as the highest manifestation of Purushottam, the supreme God.[5][6][7][8][9] According to the tradition's lore, both the religious group and Sahajanand Swami became known as *Swaminarayan* after the Swaminarayan mantra, which is a compound of two Sanskrit words, swami ("master, lord"[web 1][web 2]) and Narayan (supreme God, Vishnu).[10][note 3]

During his lifetime, Swaminarayan institutionalized his charisma and beliefs in various ways.[3] He constructed six mandirs to facilitate followers' devotional worship of God,[11][12][13] and encouraged the creation of a scriptural tradition.[14][15][3] In 1826, in a legal document titled the Lekh, Swaminarayan created two dioceses, the Laxmi Narayan Dev Gadi (Vadtal Gadi) and Nar Narayan Dev Gadi (Ahmedabad Gadi), with a hereditary leadership of acharyas and their wives,[web 3] who were authorized to install statues of deities in temples and to initiate ascetics.[3]

In Swaminarayan's soteriology the ultimate goal of life is to become *Brahmarūpa*,[16] attaining the form (*rūpa*) of Aksharbrahman, in which the *jiva* is liberated from *maya* and *saṃsāra* (the cycle of births and deaths), and enjoys eternal bliss, offering *sādhya bhakti*, continuous and pure devotion to God.[16][17]

While rooted in Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita,[note 1] for which he stated his affinity,[note 4] and incorporating devotional elements of Vallabha's Pushtimarg,[18][19][note 5] Sahajanand Swaminarayan gave his own specific interpretations of the classical Hindu texts.[note 1] As in Vishishtadvaita, God and *jiva* are forever distinct, but a distinction is also made between Parabrahman (Purushottama, Narayana, the highest Brahman) and Aksharbrahman ('lower Brahman', the first manifestation of Brahman in empirical reality) as two distinct eternal realities.[20][web 4] This distinction is emphasized by BAPS-swamis as a defining characteristic,[20][21][22] and referred to as Akshar-Purushottam Darshan to distinguish the *Swaminarayan Darshana*, Swaminarayan's views or teachings, from other Vedanta-traditions.[web 5][20][22]

In the 20th century, due to "different interpretations of authentic successorship,"[23] various denominations split-off from the dioceses.[24] All groups regard Swaminarayan as God, but differ in their theology and the religious leadership they accept.[10][21][25][26][10][27] The BAPS, split-off in 1907 from Vadtal Gadi, venerates "a lineage of *akṣaragurus*, or living gurus, [which] has been retroactively traced back to Gunatitanand Swami."[24]

Socially, Swaminarayan accepted caste-based discrimination within the religious community, but inspired followers to engage in humanitarian service activities, leading various denominations of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya to currently provide humanitarian service globally.

Early history

Origins

The Swaminarayan Sampradaya developed out of Ramanand Swami's Uddhav Sampraday,[28][29][web 6] a Gujarat-based Sri Vaishnavism teacher rooted in Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita.[30] It takes its name from Ramanand's successor, Sahajanand Swami,[9][8] who was a charismatic leader[31] and gained fame as Swaminarayan.[9][8] The various branches of the Swaminarayan-tradition relate their origin to Sahajanand Swami,[24] but an exact "modern historical account" of his life cannot be reconstructed, given the hagiographic nature of the stories preserved among his followers.[24][32]

Sahajanand Swami

Sahajanand Swami was born on 3 April 1781 in the village of Chhapaiya in present-day Uttar Pradesh, India, and given the name Ghansyam.[9][33][34] After his parents' death, he renounced his home at the age of 11 and traveled for 7 years as a child yogi around India, taking the name Neelkanth, before settling in the hermitage of Ramanand Swami, a Vaishnava religious leader in present-day Gujarat.[9][35][36] Ramanand Swami initiated him as a Vaishnavite ascetic on 28 October 1800, giving him the name Sahajanand Swami.[24][28] According to the Swaminarayan-tradition, Ramanand appointed Sahajanand to be his successor and the leader of the sampradaya in 1801, shortly before his death.[37][36][38]

Ramanand Swami died on 17 December 1801,[39] and Sahajanand Swami became the new leader of the remains of the Uddhav Sampraday, despite "considerable opposition."[37][web 6] Several members left the group, or were expelled by Sahajanand Swami, and one group established a new group, together with one of the four temples of Ramanand.[28] While the Krishna-iconography in the original temples, as well as the Vachanamritam and the

Shikshapatri, reflect a belief in Krishna as Purushottam,[24] as early as 1804, Sahajanand Swami himself was described as the manifestation of God,[28] and over his life, he would be worshipped as God by thousands of followers.[40][41] Nevertheless, according to Kim in the original sampradaya Sahajanand Swami is not "necessarily" regarded as Purushottam.[6][note 6]

In time, both the leader and the group became known by the name "Swaminarayan."[8] According to the "Swaminarayan origin narrative",[24] shortly after his succession, Sahajanand Swami directed devotees to chant a new mantra, "Swaminarayan" (*Svāmīnārāyaṇa*),[28][10] a compound of two Sanskrit words: Swami (*Svāmī*) and Narayan (*Nārāyaṇa*),[10] that is, Vishnu c.q. Purushottam.[10] According to the Swaminarayan-tradition, Narayana was also a second name given to Saharajand when he was initiated as an ascetic.[24][28][note 3]

Growth and opposition

The sampradaya grew quickly over the 30 years under Swaminarayan's leadership, with British sources estimating at least 100,000 followers by the 1820s.[46][9][36] He was a charismatic personality,[3] and in the early period of the Swaminarayan movement, followers were often induced into a visionary trance state interpreted as samadhi, either by direct contact with Swaminarayan or by chanting the Swaminarayan mantra, in which they had visions of their "chosen deity" (*istadevata*).[47][48][49] Swaminarayan was criticized for receiving large gifts from his followers after renouncing the world and assuming leadership of the fellowship.[50] Swaminarayan responded that he accepts gifts because "it was appropriate for the person to give" and to satisfy the devotion of his followers but he does not seek it out of personal desire.[51]

In the first fifteen years of his leadership, until the arrival of the British colonizers in Gujarat, Swaminarayan's ministry "faced great opposition,"[52] and a number of attempts at his life, "by both religious and secular powers," are reported.[52] Swaminarayan accepted people from all castes, undermining caste-based discrimination, which lead to criticism and opposition from high-caste Hindus.[53] While Sahajanand's ethical reforms have been regarded as a protest against immoral Pushtimarg practices,[54] Sahajanand was in fact influenced by and positive towards Vallabha and other Vaisnava-traditions,[55] and he incorporated elements of Vallabha's Pushtimarg,[18][55] popular in Gujarat,[*citation needed*] to gain recognition.[18][note 5] His reforms may have been primarily targeted against Tantrics, and against practices "associated with village and tribal deities."[55]

According to David Hardiman, the lower classes were attracted to Swaminarayan's community because they aspired to the same success and mercantile ideology. It grew, states Hardiman, in an era of British colonial rule where land taxes were raised to unprecedented heights, lands were "snatched from village communities", and poverty spread.[56] According to Hardiman, Sahajanand's pacifist approach to community re-organization and reaching out to the lowest classes of his day found support with the British rulers, but it also furthered their exploitation by the British, the local moneylenders and richer farmers.[56]

Swaminarayan ordained 3,000 swamis over the span of his leadership,[10][9] with 500 of them into the highest state of asceticism as *paramhansas*, thereby allowing them to suspend all

distinguishing practices, like applying sacred marks.[52][57][note 7] Swaminarayan encouraged his swamis to serve others. During the devastating famine of 1813–14 in Kathiawar, for example, the swamis collected alms in unaffected regions of Gujarat to distribute among the afflicted.[58][59] As teachers and preachers, they were instrumental in spreading Swaminarayan's teachings throughout Guajarat, which aided to the rapid growth of the sampradaya,[59][24] and they created the "sacred literature" of the sampradaya, authoring scriptural commentaries and composing bhakti poetry.[59][60][61][62]

Temples

Toward the end of his life, Swaminarayan institutionalized his charisma in various ways: the building of temples to facilitate worship; the writing of sacred texts; and the creation of a religious organization for the initiation of ascetics.[3] He instituted the mandir tradition of the sampradaya to provide followers a space for devotional worship (upasana, *upāsanā*) to God.[11][12] He constructed six mandirs in the following locations, housing images of Krishna[63] which are regarded as representations of Swaminarayan by his followers:[63]

- Swaminarayan Temple, Ahmedabad dedicated to Nar Narayan (1822)
- Swaminarayan Mandir, Bhuj dedicated to Nar Narayan (1823)
- Swaminarayan Mandir, Vadtal dedicated to Radha Krishna and Lakshmi Narayan (1824)
- Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Dholera dedicated to Radha Madan Mohan (1826)
- Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Junagadh dedicated to Ranchhodrai and Radha Ramandev (1827)
- Swaminarayan Mandir, Gadhada dedicated to Radha Gopinath (1828).[64]

Swaminarayan installed murtis of various manifestations of Krishna in the temples. For example, idol of Vishnu was installed with his consort Lakshmi and idol of Krishna was installed with his consort Radha to highlight the representation of God and his ideal devotee in the central shrines of each of these temple.[65] He also installed his own image in the form of Harikrishna in a sideshrine at the mandir at Vadtal.[63][66][67][68] The BAPS initiated the tradition of installing murtis of God (Swaminarayan) and his ideal devotee to facilitate his followers' pursuit of moksha.[69]

Vadtal Gadi and Ahmedabad Gadi

Acharya Ajendraprasad & Acharya Koshalendraprasad

In the early years of the sampradaya, Swaminarayan personally directed control of the spiritual and administrative duties.[70] Swaminarayan later delegated responsibilities amongst

swamis, householders, and the members of his family.[70] Before his death, Swaminarayan established two dioceses, the Laxmi Narayan Dev Gadi (Vadtal Gadi) and Nar Narayan Dev Gadi (Ahmedabad Gadi) as recorded in the Lekh,[71][24][72][10] based on the Vadtal and Ahmedabad mandirs, respectively.

Acharyas

On 21 November 1825, he appointed two of his nephews as acharyas to administer the two gadis, or dioceses, adopting them as his own sons and establishing a hereditary line of succession.[10] These acharyas came from his immediate family after sending representatives to search them out in Uttar Pradesh.[73] They were authorized to "administer his temple properties"[10] which are distributed among them.[71][72] Ayodhyaprasadji, son of his elder brother Rampratap, became acharya of the Nar Narayan Dev Gadi (Ahmedabad diocese), and Raghuvirji, son of his younger brother Ichcharam, became acharya of the Laxmi Narayan Dev Gadi (Vadtal diocese).[74][71][note 8] Siddhant paksh believes Ajendraprasad is the current acharya of the Vadtal Gadi.[*citation needed*] Due to Swaminarayan's initiation into the Uddhav sampradaya, the Vadtal and Ahmedabad-branches trace the authority of their acharyas to Ramanuja's guru parampara.[80]

Death of Swaminarayan

Swaminarayan died on 1 June 1830, but the sampradaya continued to grow, with British officials counting 287,687 followers by 1872.[81][82] By 2001, the number of members had grown to an estimated 5 million followers.[1]

Schisms

Currently the following branches exist:

- Laxmi Narayan Dev Gadi (Vadtal Gadi) (1825, established by Swaminarayan)

- International Swaminarayan Satsang Mandal (ISSM)(daughter-branch, USA)

- Laxminarayan Dev Yuvak Mandal (LNDYM)(youth-wing)

- Shree Swaminarayan Agyna Upasana Satsang Mandal (SSAUSM)(daughter-branch, USA)

    - Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS)(split-off from Vadtal Gadi in 1907, established by Shastriji Maharaj)
        - Gunatit Samaj (Yogi Divine Society (YDS), split-off from BAPS in 1966. Several wings:YDS, The Anoopam Mission, and The Gunatit Jyot
    - Swaminarayan Gurukul (educational institution established in 1947, by Dharmajivandasji Swami in order to spread sadvidya in students around the world)[83]

- Nar Narayan Dev Gadi (Ahmedabad Gadi) (1825, established by Swaminarayan)

- International Swaminarayan Satsang Organisation (ISSO)(daughter-branch, USA)

    - ISSO Seva (2001, charity organisation)

- Narnarayan Dev Yuvak Mandal (NNDYM)(youth organisation)

- Swaminarayan Gadi (Maninagar)(split-off from Ahmedabad Gadi in the 1940s)
  - Swaminarayan Mandir Vasna Sanstha (SMVS)(split-off from Swaminarayan Gadi in 1987)

Different interpretations of succession

In the 20th century, due to "different interpretations of authentic successorship,"[23] various branches split-off from the diocese,[84] the largest being the BAPS.[24] All groups regard Swaminarayan as the manifestation of God but differ in their theology and the religious leadership they accept.[10][25]

The Vadtal Gadi and Ahmedabad Gadi are the original institutions, with a hereditary leadership in the form of acharyas. The succession was established in the *Lekh*, a legal document authored by Swaminarayan.[71] It is followed by the Nar-Narayan (Ahmedabad) and Laxmi-Narayan (Vadtal) branches, but "downplay[ed] or ignored" by other branches that "emphasis the authority of the sadhus over the acharya."[85][note 9]

Williams notes that "this important function of the acharya as religious specialist is emphasized in all the Swaminarayan scriptures including the Desh Vibhag Lekh. In the Shikshapatri Verse 62: 'My followers should worship only those images of the lord that are given by the acharya or installed by him. In Vachanamrut Vadtal I-18.4 and in other scriptures, Swaminarayan signifies the importance of Dharmakul (family of Dharmadev, Swaminarayan's father), and states that those who know him to be their deity and desire moksha shall follow only the Swaminarayan Sampraday under the leadership of the acharyas which he has established and their successors.

According to the Vadtal branch, "Gopalanand Swami was the chief ascetic disciple of Sajahanand," and "the acharyas have the sole authority to initiate sadhus and to install images in the temples."[86] According to the BAPS, the largest Swaminarayan offshoot, Gunatitanand Swami was appointed successor of Sajahanand, and "the chief ascetics had been given the authority to perform the primary rituals of the group, including the initiation of sadhus," and "this authority had not been revoked when the acharyas were appointed."[87] They furthermore argue that those who life a strictly virtuous life are the ones worthy of inheritance. According to Williams, "[t]he emphasis is on the spiritual lineage rather than the hereditary lineage, and the claim is that the one who observes the rules should be the acharya."[88]

According to the BAPS, Swaminarayan established two modes of succession: a hereditary administrative mode through the *Lekh*; and a spiritual mode established in the Vachanamrut, in which Swaminarayan conveyed his theological doctrines.[89] According to the BAPS, Swaminarayan described a spiritual mode of succession whose purpose is purely soteriological,[89] reflecting his principle that a form of God who lives "before one's eyes" is necessary for aspirants to attain moksha (liberation).[90] They venerate "a lineage of *akṣaragurus*, or living gurus, [which] has been retroactively traced back to Gunatitanand Swami."[24] According to the BAPS, Swaminarayan identified Gunatitanand Swami as the first successor in this lineage.[10] For the sadhus of the Vadtal diocese, the idea that

Swaminarayan had appointed Gunatitanand as his spiritual successor was a heretical teaching, and they "refused to worship what they considered to be a human being."[91]

Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha

The Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) was formed in 1907, by Shastriji Maharaj (Shastri Yagnapurushdas).[92][93] He broke away from the Vadtal diocese and created BAPS according to his own interpretation of Akshar (Aksharbrahma) and Purushottam.[92][94][95] As articulated in the BAPS-theology of *Akṣara-Puruṣottama Upāsanā*,[web 11] BAPS adherents, following Shastriji Maharaj, believe that Swaminarayan introduced Gunatitanand Swami as his ideal devotee, from which a spiritual lineage of gurus began,[96][24][10] reflecting Shastriji Maharaj's idea that a form of God who lives "before one's eyes" who is to be worshipped is necessary for aspirants to attain moksha (liberation).[90][note 10]

Gunatit Samaj

The Yogi Divine Society (YDS) was established in 1966, by Dadubhai Patel and his brother, Babubhai after they were excommunicated from BAPS by Yogiji Maharaj. The brothers were expelled after it was discovered that Dadubhai illicitly collected and misappropriated funds and, falsely claiming that he was acting on the organization's behalf, led a number of young women to renounce their families and join his ashram under his leadership.[97] After Dadubhai's death in 1986, an ascetic named Hariprasad Swami became the leader of the Yogi Divine Society. Yogi Divine Society became known as the Gunatit Samaj and consists of several wings: namely, YDS, The Anoopam Mission, and The Gunatit Jyot.[98]

Swaminarayan Gadi (Maninagar)

The Swaminarayan Gadi (Maninagar) was founded in the 1940s by Muktajivandas Swami after he left the Ahmedabad diocese with the belief that Gopalanand Swami, a paramhansa from Swaminarayan's time, was the spiritual successor to Swaminarayan.[99] The current spiritual leader is Jitendrapriyadasji Swami. In addition, the Swaminarayan Gadi reveres Nirgundasji Swami, Ishwarcharandasji Swami, and Purushottampriya Swami.[100][web 12][web 13][note 11]

Followers of the Swaminarayan Gadi accept the Rahasyarth Pradeepika Tika, a five-volume work written by Abji Bapa, as an authentic exegesis of the Vachanamrut.[101]

Beliefs and practices

Swaminarayan's views are found in the Vachanamrut (*Vacanāmṛta*), the principal theological text of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya.[102] As followers believe Swaminarayan to be the manifestation of *Parabrahman*, or *Puruṣottama*, his views are considered a direct revelation of God.[103] In the Vachanamrut, Swaminarayan describes that the ultimate goal of life is moksha (*mokṣa*), a spiritual state of ultimate liberation from the cycle of births and deaths and characterized by eternal bliss and devotion to God.[104][105]

Background

Swaminayaran's *siddhanta* ("view," "doctrine") emerged within the Vedanta tradition, particularly the Vaishnava tradition as articulated by Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, and Chaitanya.[106][107] Swaminarayan's interpretation of the classical Hindu texts has similarities

with Ramanuja's Vishistadvaita,[108][107][109][24][note 1] for which he stated his affinity.[note 4] He also incorporated elements of Vallabha's Pushtimarg, which belongs to Shuddhadvaita, to gain recognition.[18][note 5] Yet, there are also metaphysical and philosophical divergences between Swaminarayan's and Ramanuja's teachings, most notably the distinction between Purushottam and Aksharbrahman,[110][19][note 1] referred to by BAPS-swamis as the Akshar-Purushottam Darshan (philosophy) and used to set apart Swaminarayan's teachings from other Vedanta traditions.[111] While the Vadtal Mandir states that "Swaminarayan propagated a philosophy called Vishistadvaita,"[web 6] a number of BAPS-swamis argue that Swaminarayan's teachings are a distinct system within the Vedanta-tradition.[112][22]

Soteriology - *Brahmarūp*

In Swaminarayan's soteriology, the ultimate goal of life is to become *Brahmarūp*,[16] attaining the form (*rūpa*) of Aksharbrahman,[web 15] in which the *jiva* is liberated from *maya* and *saṃsāra* (the cycle of births and deaths), and in which the *jiva* offers *sādhya bhakti*, continuous and pure devotion to God.[16][17] Whereas identification with Purushottam is impossible, *Brahmarūpa* as identification with Akshrabrahman is feasible and encouraged,[113] though the jiva or ishwar remains distinct from Aksharbrahman.[114][115]

To become *Brahmarūp*, an individual must overcome the ignorance of maya, which Swaminarayan describes as self-identification with the physical body, personal talents, and material possessions.[116][note 12] Swaminarayan explains in the Vachanamrut that ekantik dharma is a means to earn God's grace and attain liberation.[117][118][119][note 13] Ekantik dharma (*ekāntik dharma*) consists of dharma (*dharma*; religious and moral duties), gnan (*jñāna*; realization of the atman and Paramatman) vairagya (*vairāgya*; dispassion for worldly objects), and bhakti (recognition of Swaminarayan as Purushottam and devotion to him, coupled with the understanding of God's greatness).[24][120][118][119][note 13]

Various branches of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya differ in their belief of how to attain moksha. The Narnarayan and Laxminarayan Gadis believe moksha is attained by worshipping the sacred images of Swaminarayan installed by acharyas.[121] In the BAPS reading of the Vachanamrut and other scriptures,[120] the jiva becomes *brahmarūp*, or like Aksharbrahman, under the guidance of the manifest form of God.[122][123][124][note 14] The Swaminarayan Gadi (Maninagar) believes that moksha can be attained through the lineage of gurus beginning with Gopalanand Swami.[99]

Ekantik dharma

Rama and Krishna."[157] He was thus "not a manifestation of Krishna, as some believed,"[157] but "the full manifestation of Purushottam, the supreme person himself."[157] These other manifestations of God, of which Rama and Krishna are two examples, are known as avatars, and according to Paramtattvadas Purushottam (or God) is believed to be "metaphysically different"[152] from them and their cause, the avatarin,[152] whom Swaminarayan revealed as himself.[152]

Akshar-Purushottam Darsana

Main article: Akshar-Purushottam Darshan

The BAPS puts a strong emphasis on the distinction between Akshar and Purushottam, which it sees as a defining difference between Ramanuja's Vishistadvaita and other systems

of Vedanta, and Swaminarayan's teachings.[20][21][22] While his preference for Ramanuja's theology is stated in the sacred text, the Shikshapatri (*Śikṣāpatrī*),[note 4] in his discourses collected in the Vachanamrut Swaminarayan gave a somewhat different explanation of the classical Hindu texts. In Ramanuja's understanding, there are three entities: Parabrahman, maya (*māyā*), and jiva (*jīva*).[158][159][160][161] Throughout the Vachanamrut, Swaminarayan identifies five eternal and distinct entities: Parabrahman, Aksharbrahman (*Akṣarabrahman*, also Akshara, *Akṣara*, or Brahman), maya, ishwar (*īśvara*), and jiva.[162][163][164][165][note 19] This distinction between Akshar and Purushottam is referred to by the BAPS as *Akshar-Purushottam Darshan* or *Aksarabrahma-Parabrahma-Darsanam*,[20] (*darśana*, philosophy)[note 20] and used as an alternate name for *Swaminarayan Darshana*,[20][22][web 5] Swaminarayan's views or teachings. This emphasis on the distinction between Akshar and Purushottam is also reflected in its name[69] and the prominent position of Akshar as the living guru.[24][168]

BAPS-theologian Paramtattvadas (2017) and others further elaborate on these five eternal realities:

God is **Parabrahman**, the all-doer (*kartā*, "omniagent"), possessing an eternal and divine form (*sākār,*) but transcending all entities (*sarvoparī*,), and forever manifests on Earth to liberate spiritual seekers (*pragat*).[169][note 21]

Aksharbrahman, from *akshar* (अक्षर, "imperishable," "unalterable"), and *Brahman*, is the second highest entity and has four forms: 1) Parabrahman's divine abode; 2) the ideal devotee of Parabrahman, eternally residing in that divine abode; 3) the sentient substratum pervading and supporting the cosmos (chidakash, *cidākāśa*); and 4) the Aksharbrahman Guru, who serves as the manifest form of God on earth. In the BAPS, the gurus is the ideal devotee and Aksharbrahman Guru through whom God guides aspirants to moksha.[170][171][172] This further interpretation of Akshar is one of the features that distinguishes Swaminarayan's theology from others.[173][174][175][110][note 22]

Maya refers to the universal material source used by Parabrahman to create the world.[177][note 23] Maya has three gunas (*guṇas*, qualities) which are found to varying degrees in everything formed of it: serenity (sattva), passion (rajas), and darkness (tamas).[178][note 24] Maya also refers to the ignorance which enshrouds both ishwars and jivas, which results in their bondage to the cycle of births and deaths (transmigration) and subsequently suffering.[179][180][181][note 25]

Ishwars are sentient beings responsible for the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the cosmos, at the behest of Parabrahman.[178][179][note 26] While they are metaphysically higher than jivas, they too are bound by maya and must transcend it to attain moksha.[182][183][181][note 27]

Jivas, also known as atmans, are distinct, eternal entities, composed of consciousness that can reside in bodies, animating them. The jiva is inherently pure and flawless, though under the influence of maya, jivas falsely believe themselves to be the bodies they inhabit and remain bound to the cycle of transmigration.[184][185][181][note 28]

involves singing a devotional song of praise, while waving a flame before the murtis. Arti is performed five times per day in shikharbaddha mandirs and twice per day in hari mandirs.

Thal, a ritual offering of food to God accompanied by devotional songs, is also regularly offered three times per day to the murtis in Swaminarayan mandirs. The sanctified food is distributed to devotees after the ritual.[192]

In all major Swaminarayan temples, usually Radha Krishna, Lakshmi Narayan, Nar Narayan and Swaminarayan idols are worshipped.[193][*page needed*]

Devotees also engage with the murtis in a Swaminarayan mandir through other worship rituals, including darshan, dandvat, and pradakshina. Darshan is the devotional act of viewing the murtis, which are adorned with elegant clothing and ornaments.[194] Dandvats (*daṇḍavat*), or prostrations, before the murtis symbolize surrendering to God.[195] Pradakshina (*pradakṣiṇā*), or circumambulations around the murtis, express the desire to keep God at the center of the devotees' lives.[196]

Community building and worship

Swaminarayan mandirs also serve as hubs for congregational worship and theological and cultural education.[197][198] Singing devotional songs, delivering katha (sermons), and performing rituals such as arti all occur daily in Swaminarayan mandirs. In addition, devotees from the surrounding community gather at least once per week, often on a weekend, to perform these activities congregationally.[199]

Cultural and theological instruction is also delivered on this day of weekly congregation. Cultural instruction may include Gujarati language instruction; training in music and dance; and preparation for festival performances.[188] Theological instruction includes classes on the tradition's history and doctrines, and the life and work of the tradition's gurus.[200]

Types of Swaminarayan temples

Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi

Swaminarayan followers conduct their worship in various types of mandirs. The homes of Swaminarayan devotees contain ghar mandirs, or home shrines, which serve as spaces for the daily performance of worship and ritual activities such as arti, thal, and reading sermons or scripture.[201]

The majority of freestanding public Swaminarayan mandirs are hari mandirs, whose architectural style and consecration rituals are adopted to the means available to the local congregation.[186]

As a means of expressing their devotion to Swaminarayan and their guru, some congregations elect to construct stone, shikharbaddha mandirs following Hindu architectural scriptures.[202] In addition to being an expression of devotion, congregants strengthen their sense of community by cooperatively volunteering to construct these mandirs.[203]

A fourth type of mandir, called a mahamandiram (*mahāmandiram*) can be found in India and the United States, in New Delhi, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, and Robbinsville, NJ.[204][205][206] These mahamandirs are the largest type of mandir constructed and they contain exhibits which present the life of Swaminarayan and the history of Hinduism in various formats with the goal of inspiring introspection and self-improvement.[207]

Scriptural tradition

Vachanamrut manuscript

In addition to Swaminarayan's acceptance of perennial Hindu texts such as the four Vedas, Vedanta-sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita, Swaminarayan encouraged the creation of a scriptural tradition specific to the Swaminarayan Sampradaya,[14][15] as part of the institutionalization of his charisma.[3] Along with theological texts with revelatory status, the genres of textual production in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya include sacred biographies, ethical precepts, commentaries, and philosophical treatises.[208][209]

Vachanamrut

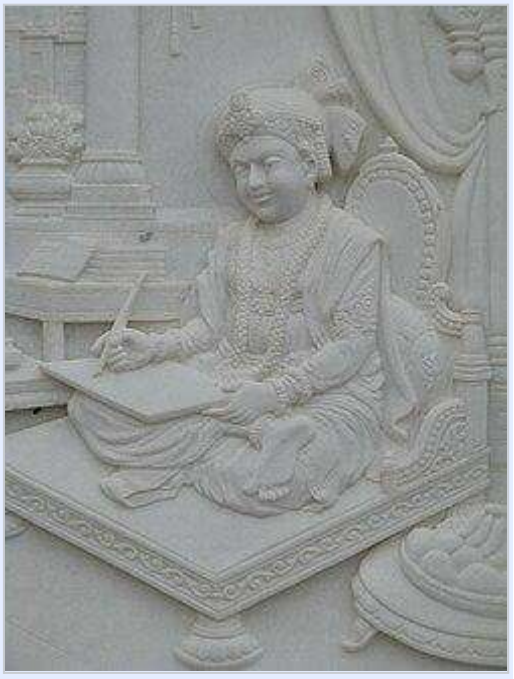
Main article: Vachanamrut

The Vachanamrut, literally the 'immortalizing ambrosia in the form of words', is the fundamental text for the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, containing Swaminarayan's interpretations of the classical Hindu texts.[103][210] The text is a compilation of 273 discourses, with each discourse within the collection also called a Vachanamrut.[211] Swaminarayan delivered these discourses in Gujarati between the years of 1819–1829, and his senior disciples noted his teachings while they were delivered and compiled them during Swaminarayan's lifetime.[212] In this scripture, Swaminarayan gives his interpretation of the classical Hindu texts, which includes five eternal entities: jiva, ishwar, maya, Aksharbrahman, Parabrahman.[213][163] He also describes the ultimate goal of life, moksha (*mokṣa*), a spiritual state of ultimate liberation from the cycle of births and deaths and characterized by eternal bliss and devotion to God.[214][105] To attain this state, Swaminarayan

states that the jiva needs to follow the four-fold practice of ekantik dharma[note 29] to transcend maya[215][note 30] and become brahmarup[118] and reside in the service of God.[216][217]

As followers believe Swaminarayan to be God, the Vachanamrut is considered a direct revelation of God and thus the most precise interpretation of the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other important Hindu scriptures.[103][210] This scripture is read by followers regularly and discourses are conducted daily in Swaminarayan temples around the world.[218]

Shikshapatri



An illustration of Swaminarayan writing the Shiskhapatri

The Shikshapatri is a composition of 212 Sanskrit verses believed to be authored by Swaminarayan and completed in 1826.[36][15] As an 'epistle of precepts,' the verses primarily communicate the Swaminarayan Sampradaya's moral injunctions for devotees which should be read daily.[219][220][note 31] Swaminarayan states that the Shikshapatri is not merely his words but his personified form and merits worship in its own right.[221][222]

Sacred biographies

The Swaminarayan Sampradaya has produced voluminous biographical literature on Swaminarayan. The Satsangi Jivan, a five volume Sanskrit sacred biography of Swaminarayan, consists of 17,627 verses written by Shatananda Muni that also incorporates some of Swaminarayan's teachings.[223] The Bhaktachintamani is a sacred biography of Swaminarayan composed by Nishkulanand Swami. Consisting of 8,536 couplets, this biography serves as a record of Swaminarayan's life and teachings.[224] The Harililamrut is a longer biographical text in verse written by Dalpatram and published in 1907.[225] The Harilila Kalpataru a 33,000-verse Sanskrit biographical text, was written by Achintyanand Brahmachari, at the suggestion of Gunatitanand Swami.[223][226] These and many other sacred

biographies complement the theological texts, insofar as their incidents serve as practical applications of the theology.[14]

Swamini Vato

The Swamini Vato is a compilation of teachings delivered by Gunatitanand Swami over the course of his forty-year ministry,[219] which is valued by the BAPS.[85] He was one of Swaminarayan's foremost disciple,[227][219] and according to the BAPS and some denominations of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, he was the first manifestation of Swaminarayan in a lineage of Aksharbrahman Gurus.[228][96] Similarly to the Vachanamrut, Gunatitanand Swami's followers recorded his teachings, which were compiled in his lifetime and reviewed by Gunatitanand Swami himself.[219] These teachings were first published by Balmukund Swami in 5 chapters and then 7 chapters by Krishnaji Ada.[web 17] The text consists of approximately 1,478 excerpts taken from Gunatitanand Swami's sermons.[229] In his teachings, he reflects on the nature of human experience and offers thoughts on how one ought to frame the intentions with which they act in this world, while also elaborating on Swaminarayan's supremacy, the importance of the sadhu, and the means for attaining liberation.[230] Often, Gunatitanand Swami elaborates upon topics or passages from the Vachanamrut, which lends the text to be considered a 'natural commentary' on the Vachanamrut within the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. In addition, he often made references to other Hindu texts, parables, and occurrences in daily life in order not only to explain spiritual concepts, but also to provide guidance on how to live them.[231]

Vedanta commentaries

Early commentaries

From its early history, the Swaminarayan Sampradaya has also been involved in the practice of producing Sanskrit commentarial work as a way of engaging with the broader scholastic community. The classical Vedanta school of philosophy and theology is of particular import for the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, which has produced exegetical work on the three canonical Vedanta texts—the Upanishads, Brahmasutras, and the Bhagavad Gita.[232] While Swaminarayan himself did not author a commentary on these texts, he engaged with them and their interpretations in the Vachanamrut. The earliest Vedanta commentarial literature in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya reflects a heavy dependence on the Vedanta systems of Ramanuja and Vallabha. Although authorship of these nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century texts[233] are attributed to two of Swaminarayan's eminent disciples, Muktanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami,[62]

Swaminarayan Bhashyam

The most comprehensive commentarial work on Vedanta in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya is the Swaminarayan Bhashyam authored by Bhadreshdas Swami, an ordained monk of BAPS. It is a five-volume work written in Sanskrit and published between 2009 and 2012. The format and style of exegesis and argument conform with the classical tradition of Vedanta commentarial writing. In more than two thousand pages, the commentator Bhadreshdas Swami, offers detailed interpretations of the principal ten Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Brahmasutras (Vedanta Sutras) that articulate Swaminarayan's ideas and interpretations.[234]

The Swaminarayan Bhashyam has led to some recognition for Swaminarayan's Akshar-Purushottam distinction as a distinct view within Vedanta. The Shri Kashi Vidvat Parishad, an authoritative council of scholars of Vedic dharma and philosophy throughout India, stated in a meeting in Varanasi on 31 July 2017 that it is "appropriate to identify Sri Svāmināràyaṇa's Vedānta by the title: Akṣarapuruṣottama Darśana,"[note 32] and that his siddhanta ("view," "doctrine") on the Akshar-Purushottam distinction is "distinct from Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and all other doctrines."[web 5][web 18] Swaminarayan's Akshar-Purushottam *darshan* was also acclaimed as a distinct view within Vedanta in 2018 by professor Ashok Aklujkar, at the 17th World Sanskrit Conference, stating that the Swaminarayan Bhashyam "very clearly and effectively explains that Akshar is distinct from Purushottam."[web 4][note 33][235]

Influence on society

Humanitarian Service

In addition to his efforts in social reform, Swaminarayan was instrumental in providing humanitarian aid to the people of Gujarat during turbulent times of famine.[236] When given the opportunity to receive two boons from his guru, Swaminarayan asked to receive any miseries destined for followers and to bear any scarcities of food or clothing in place of any followers.[237] In the initial years of the sampradaya, Swaminaryan maintained almshouses throughout Gujarat and directed swamis to maintain the almshouses even under the threat of physical injury by opponents.[238] During a particularly harsh famine in 1813–14, Swaminarayan himself collected and distributed grains to those who were suffering, and he had step wells and water reservoirs dug in various villages.[236] He codified devotees' engagement with humanitarian service in the Shikshapatri, instructing followers to help the poor and those in need during natural disasters, to establish schools, and to serve the ill, according to their ability.[239]

Consequently, various denominations of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya currently engage in humanitarian service at a global scale. ISSO Seva, a subsidiary of the Ahmedabad diocese, is involved in disaster relief, food and blood donation drives in the United States and providing accessible healthcare in Africa.[web 19][*better source needed*] BAPS Charities, a humanitarian services wing of the Baps, engages in medical, educational, and disaster relief efforts.[240][241] The Gunatit Samaj also hosts medical camps, provides educational services, healthcare, and other social services in India.[web 20] The Swaminarayan Gadi (Maninagar) diocese primarily hosts health camps and other social services in the UK, Africa and North America.[web 21] SVG Charity, a subsidiary of the Laxmi Narayan Dev Gadi, is involved in disaster relief, food and medicine donations, blood drives, and organ donation registration drives across the United States, Europe, Canada, and India.[web 22][web 23]

Caste

During Swaminarayan's time, the oppressive nature of caste-based customs, like endogamy, dress codes, and commensality, pervaded many aspects of society.[242] Religious groups and other institutions often regulated membership based on caste,[243] and Swaminarayan too supported the caste system.[244] According to Williams, caste distinctions and inconsistencies between caste theory and practice still exist within the Swaminarayan sampraday.[245]

Dalits or the former untouchables were banned from Swaminarayan temples from the beginning of certain sects. There was however one case a separate temple being built at Chhani near Vadodra for the dalits.[246] After the Indian Independence in 1947, in order to be

exempted from the Bombay Harijan Temple Entry Act of November 1947, which made it illegal for any temple to bar its doors to the previously outcaste communities, the Nar Narayan diocese went to court to claim that they were not 'Hindus', but members of an entirely different religion. Since the sect was not "Hindu", they argued that the Temple Entry Act did not apply to them. The sect did win the case in 1951, which was later overturned by the Indian Supreme court.[247][web 24]

Swaminarayan demanded a vow from his followers that they would not accept food from members of lower castes,[244] and explicated this in the Shikshapatri, in which Swaminarayan states that his followers should follow rules of the caste system when consuming food and water:[248][249]

None shall receive food and water, which are unacceptable at the hands of some people under scruples of caste system, may the same happen to the sanctified portions of the Shri Krishna, except at Jagannath Puri."[250][251]

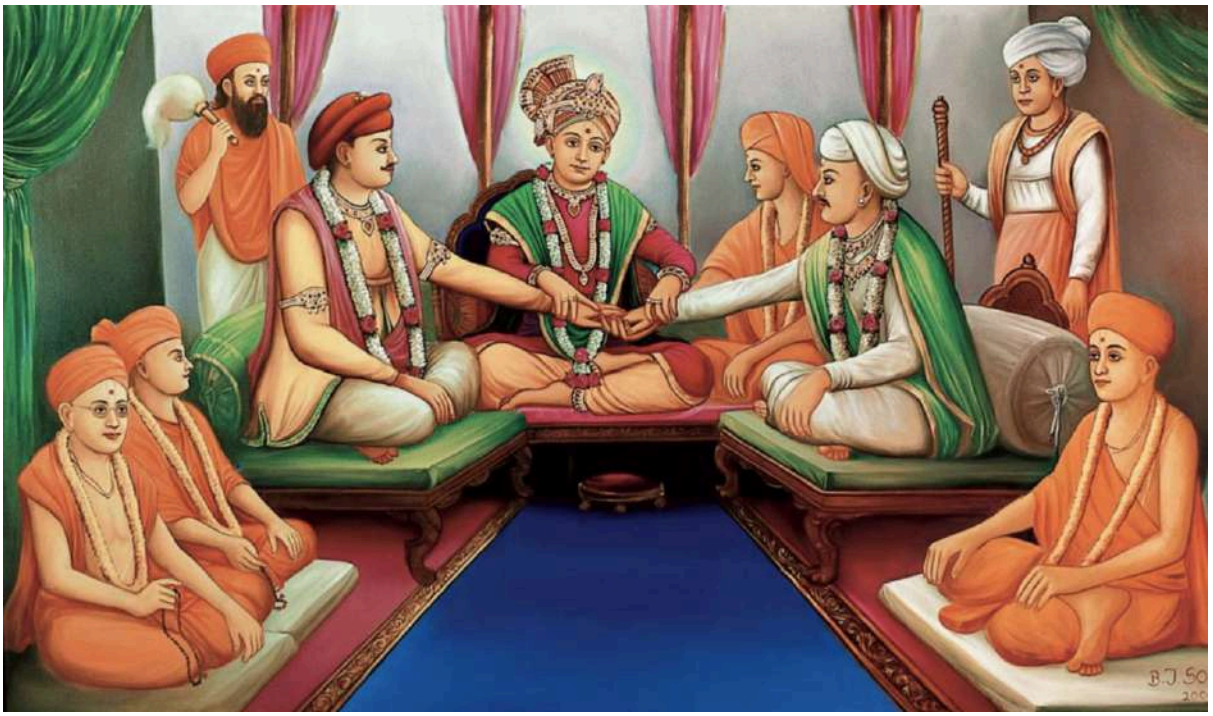
BAPS-member Parikh attributes this statement to "deep-rooted rigidities of age-old varna-stratified society," and speculates that "Possibly, Swaminarayan sought to subtly subvert and thereby undermine the traditional social order instead of negating it outright through such prescriptions."[252]

BAPS-sadhu Mangalnidhidas acknowledges that Swaminarayan accepted the caste system, which according to Mangalnidhidas may have been "a strategic accommodation to the entrenched traditions of the various elements in Hindu society,"[253] but acknowledging that this may have had "unintended negative consequences such as the reinforcement of caste identities."[254] Mangalnidhidas states that, in the early years of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, high-caste Hindus criticized Swaminarayan for his teachings, inclusiveness, and practices that undermined caste-based discrimination,[53][note 34] and argues that, overall, Swaminarayan's followers, practices and teachings helped reduce the oppressive nature of caste-based customs prevalent in that era and drew individuals of lower strata towards the Swaminarayan sampraday.[249]

****

Photos

Swaminarayan, founder of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya

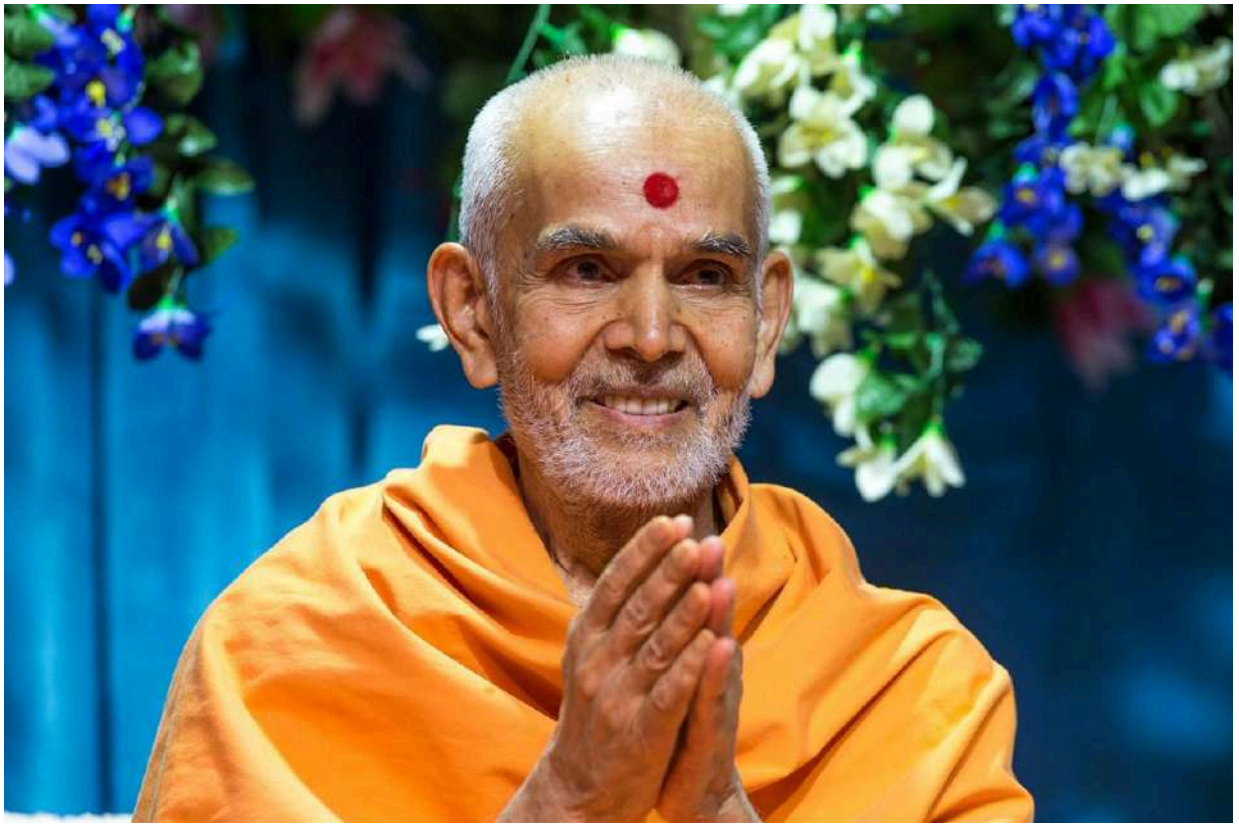


Swaminarayan, acharyas, and ascetics

Supreeme Head of Swaminarayan Sect after the Lord Swaminarayan His name is H.H. 1008 shree Ajendraprasaji maharajshree

Acharya Maharajshri Koshalendraprasad Pande is 7th descendant of Bhagwan Shree Swaminarayan and current Acharya Maharaj of Shree NarNarayan Dev diocese in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

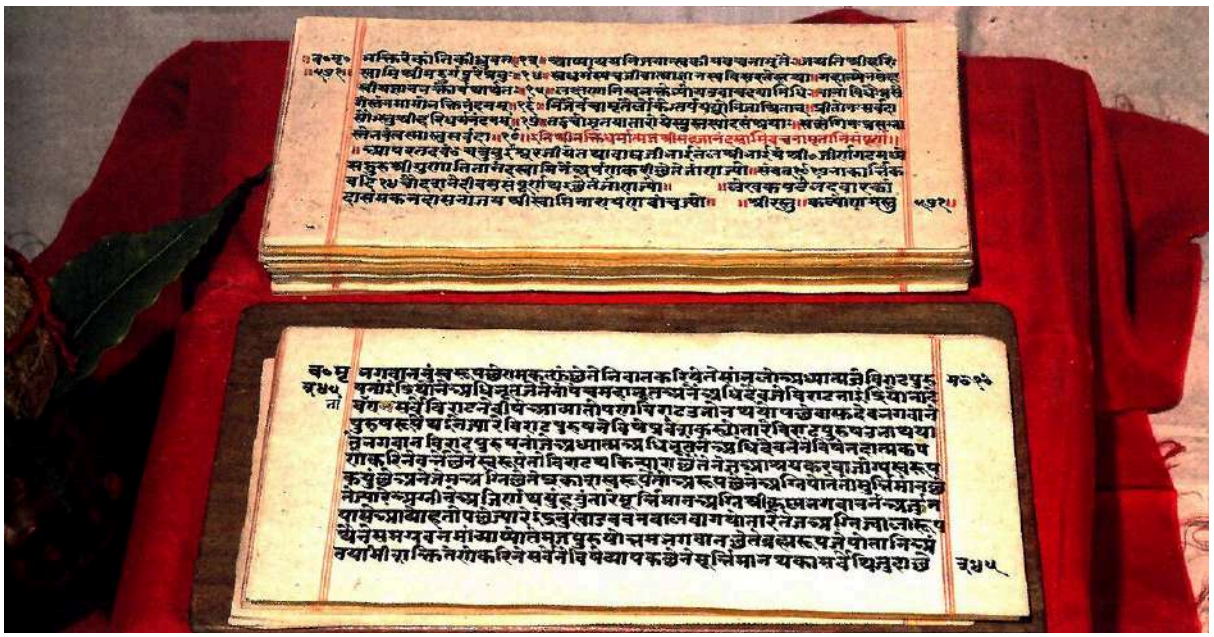
Swaminarayan temple Ahmedabad 1866



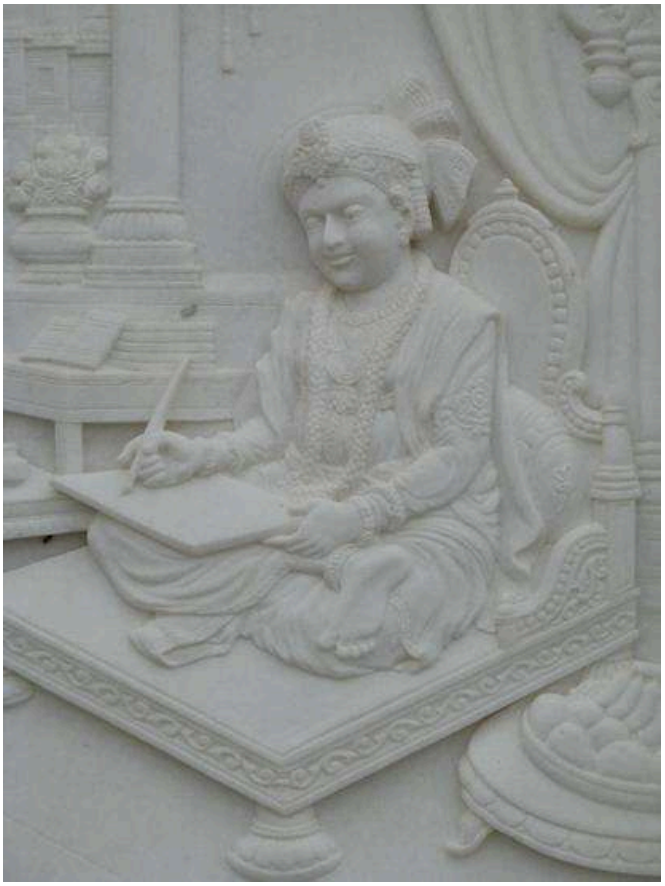
Mahant Swami Maharaj, current guru and president of BAPS

Murtis of Radha (right), Krishna (center) and HariKrishna Maharaj (left) at Swaminarayan Temple, Vadtal

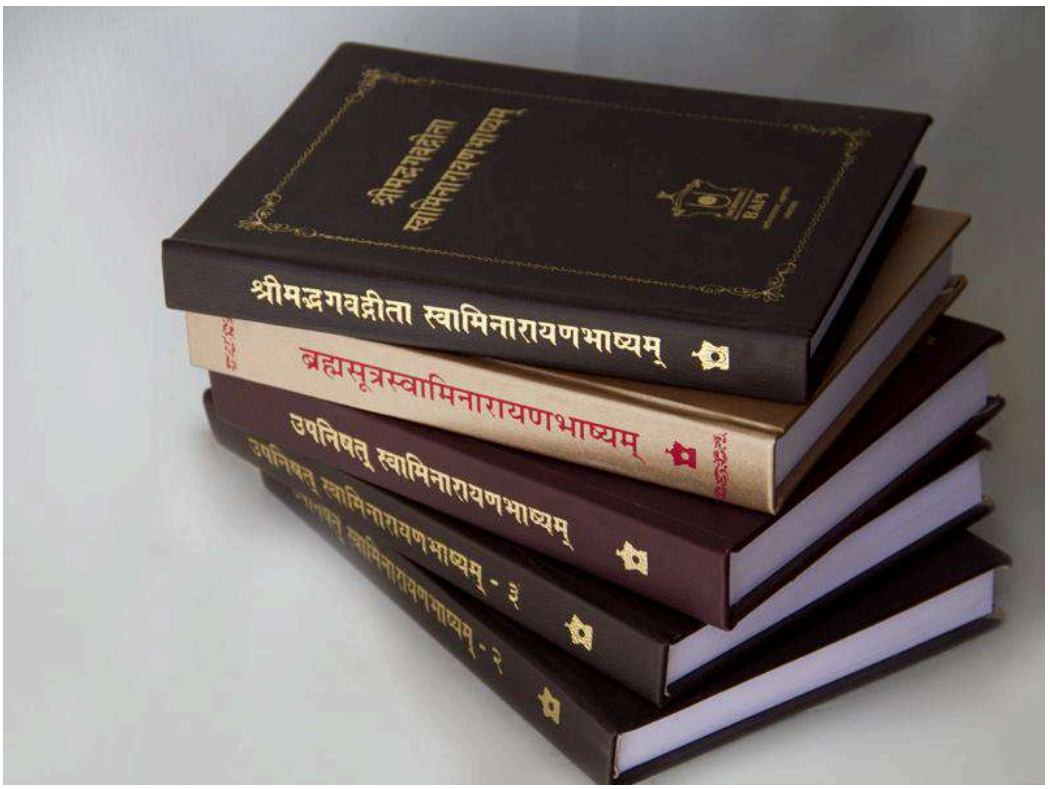
Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi



Vachanamrut manuscript



An illustration of Swaminarayan writing the Shiskhapatri



Swaminarayan Bhashyam

****

Videos

In conversation with Swaminarayan sampradaya (22 min):
https://youtu.be/cMOeAwQj3sM?si=ufhfuLr_vV17jwh0
Today's secret in Swaminarayan Sampradaya (7 min):
https://youtu.be/_KSWhUDhCz4?si=ZeZE4N8oqLmKBorv
Shravan parayan: Dhyan mimamsa in Swaminarayan Sampradaya (1 hr 5 min):
https://youtu.be/u24o_4gngxY?si=XOxlOfqvFqrCBQDq
Story of Swaminarayan Sampradaya (3 min):
https://youtu.be/ZRLxV2LNQw8?si=1yXdNm89GRAfgnMf
Swaminarayan or Sahajananda Swami (0.57 min):
https://youtu.be/ZRLxV2LNQw8?si=1yXdNm89GRAfgnMf
Bhagwan Swaminarayan gave diksha to 500 swamis at once 1 min):
https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1Bas2fwt1d/
****

Note: **At the end of this ebook, two pages are included, giving (I) Author info, and (ii) a master link and QR code to download all my Technical (viz. Thermodynamics, Heat Transfer, and Cryogenic Engineering) ebooks plus Spiritual ebooks, stored in archive.org.**

Please have a look and tell your friends and contacts, students, teachers and researchers too, so that they can benefit from these free resources. Thanks, regards.

***

About the Author

Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar is a Mechanical Engineer with specialization in Cryogenics. He obtained his B. E. In Mechanical Engineering from Karnataka Regional Engg College, (Now NITK), Surathkal, India and M.Sc. in Cryogenics from the University of Southampton, U.K., and Ph.D. from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore.

He has worked in prestigious organizations such as BARC, Bombay and Centre for Advanced Technology (CAT), Indore,as Head of Cryogenics Dept and contributed to the design of cryogenic systems, including the Thermovac chamber for ISRO, Bangalore.

He was also a visiting fellow at Superconducting Super Collider Project, at Texas, USA.

He has also served as Professor, Head of Department, and Principal in reputed engineering institutions.

Dr. Thirumaleshwar has authored a large number of FREE ebooks on Engineering subjects such as Thermodynamics, Heat Transfer, and Cryogenic Engineering, which are useful for students and teachers.

Driven by a deep interest in India's spiritual heritage, he has also authored many FREE ebooks on Temples, Saints, Gurus, and Vedic topics, with the aim of preserving and spreading this knowledge to future generations.

All his ebooks are available for free download at Archive.org.

****

Where to Download all my free ebooks (Engineering + Spiritual):

All my ebooks on Engineering (Thermodynamics, Heat Transfer, Cryogenic Engineering), Temples, Saints, Gurus, and Vedic topics are available for free download from Archive.org.

Master Link (All Books):

https://archive.org/search?query=creator%3A%22Dr.%20M.%20Thirumaleshwar%22

Scan the QR code to access all free ebooks:

QR code to access all my free ebooks

All books are free to download and share for educational and spiritual purposes.

***

Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar
April 26, 2026

****